

PUBLIC SAFETY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

DATE: February 11, 2009

CALLED TO ORDER: 5:33 p.m.

ADJOURNED: 6:22 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Attending Members

Ryan Vaughn, Chair
Vernon Brown
Bob Cockrum
Benjamin Hunter
Mary Moriarty Adams
William Oliver
Marilyn Pfisterer
Christine Scales

Absent Members

AGENDA

PROPOSAL NO. 41, 2009 - appoints Sidney Eisgruber to the Crime Prevention Advisory Board
"Do Pass" Vote 8-0

PROPOSAL NO. 42, 2009 - approves the Mayor's appointment of Scott C. Newman as the Director of the Department of Public Safety
"Postponed" until March 4, 2009 Vote 8-0

PROPOSAL NO. 62, 2009- approves the consolidation of the Perry Township Fire Department with the Indianapolis Fire Department on or after August 1, 2009
"Postponed" indefinitely Vote 8-0

PROPOSAL NO. 300, 2008 - establishes a Secondary Employment Unit (SEU) in the office of the Public Safety Director to receive applications of sworn public safety officers to work or to engage in secondary employment and establishes a fee for the use of City-County assets used in the course of such secondary employment
"Tabled" Vote 8-0

Update on MECA Board – Joe Wright, Mayor, City of Beech Grove

PUBLIC SAFETY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

The Public Safety and Criminal Justice Committee of the City-County Council met on Wednesday, February 11, 2009. Chair Ryan Vaughn called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m. with the following members present: Vernon Brown, Bob Cockrum, Benjamin Hunter, Mary Moriarty Adams, William Oliver, Marilyn Pfisterer, and Christine Scales.

PROPOSAL NO. 62, 2009- approves the consolidation of the Perry Township Fire Department with the Indianapolis Fire Department on or after August 1, 2009

Chair Vaughn said that this proposal was introduced at the full Council meeting, but the Perry Township Board has not yet voted to consolidate or decided to do so.

Councillor Moriarty Adams moved, seconded by Councillor Oliver, to "Postpone" Proposal No. 62, 2009. The motion carried by a vote of 8-0.

PROPOSAL NO. 300, 2008 - establishes a Secondary Employment Unit (SEU) in the office of the Public Safety Director to receive applications of sworn public safety officers to work or to engage in secondary employment and establishes a fee for the use of City-County assets used in the course of such secondary employment

Chair Vaughn said this proposal was originally introduced in the summer of last year, and Councillor Brown organized a meeting between himself and Councillors Vaughn, Hunter, Plowman, and Gray and Public Safety Director Scott Newman. Chair Vaughn said in the meeting, they discussed the proposal and evaluated its merits. He said that they agreed to a meeting in the near future to continue discussion about the proposal.

Councillor Brown said that they had a very productive meeting and he looks forward to future meetings. He said he does not want to prevent police officers from earning extra money, but he felt that liability, accountability and fairness needed to be addressed. Councillor Hunter said he looks forward to working out a compromise on the proposal.

Councillor Oliver asked for an explanation of what the Secondary Employment Unit would do. Chair Vaughn answered that the proposal would establish an independent agency within the Department of Public Safety (DPS) that would accept applications from police officers, firefighters, and Sheriff's deputies who wish to engage in employment outside of their regular duties. The Unit would evaluate those applications and assign or grant permission for those officers to participate in outside employment. In addition, a fee would be paid by the private employer for the employment. He said the group of people that met discussed whether the schedule of the fee was reasonable or appropriate and if it would make more sense to set the fee annually, monthly, weekly, or hourly. They also discussed the types of public safety officers that are being hired off-duty. He said they do not want to be in a situation where an ordinance is being passed that disadvantages Marion County officers or firefighters, such as opening the door for officers in other counties to be hired for the jobs instead of the Marion County officers. He said he believes that Director Newman put together an action list, which he does not have available, but everyone agreed to address those issues listed. Councillor Oliver asked if the depreciation of vehicles, uniforms, etc. will also be taken into account. Chair Vaughn answered in the affirmative.

Councillor Pfisterer moved, seconded by Councillor Brown, to “Table” Proposal No. 300, 2008. The motion carried by a vote of 8-0.

PROPOSAL NO. 41, 2009 - appoints Sidney Eisgruber to the Crime Prevention Advisory Board

Ms. Eisgruber said she has lived in Indianapolis most of her life. She said she graduated from Lebanon High School and attended Indiana University (IU) for three years. She received a degree in Occupational Therapy from the IU Medical Center. She said her first few jobs were in West Virginia and California, but she moved back, got married and had three children. Ms. Eisgruber said since having her children, she has worked either part-time or per diem in order to keep up on her skills. She said she has always volunteered with her children’s schools by serving as a member of the School Commission and working for the directors of their preschools. Additionally, she also stays active in the community and is concerned with community safety. Ms. Eisgruber said she is a member of the Meridian-Kessler Neighborhood Association, and she works with a group in the neighborhood called Historic Midtown Neighborhoods Initiative (Harmoni). She said she wants to ensure that neighborhoods are safe for kids and the community in general. She said the Crime Prevention Advisory Board interested her from an Occupational Therapy standpoint, because her job is to help people help themselves. As a parent, crime concerns her, as it is increasing in the neighborhoods. She said she is a concerned citizen and mom who believes that she can be of good use on the board and ensure money is being put to good use in the city.

Councillor Brown asked if Ms. Eisgruber has been able to follow some of the grant approvals in the past couple of months with the last crime prevention grants. Ms. Eisgruber said that she attended the last Crime Prevention Advisory Board, and she understands that the board was charged with giving recommendations. However, the Mayor made changes, and it prompted the board to detail what they wanted and what the Mayor wanted. Councillor Brown said that he is glad that Ms. Eisgruber is fairly up to speed.

Councillor Pfisterer asked if it will be a problem for Ms. Eisgruber to serve with respect to the time commitment required. Ms. Eisgruber answered in the negative.

Councillor Oliver asked if Ms. Eisgruber is aware of any prevention type programs that the Meridian-Kessler group currently has that could offer insight for Ms. Eisgruber. Ms. Eisgruber said that she is unaware of anything in particular going on in her neighborhood. Councillor Oliver asked what Ms. Eisgruber would like to see in her neighborhood with relation to crime prevention for the youth or after-school enrichment programs. Ms. Eisgruber said that she believes that there is a need for more after-school enrichment or tutoring programs to keep children busy, as she believes that children need at least one parent or some type of mentor to help turn negative energy into positive energy.

Councillor Hunter moved, seconded by Councillor Moriarty Adams, to forward Proposal No. 41, 2009 to the full Council with a “Do Pass” recommendation. The motion carried by a vote of 8-0.

PROPOSAL NO. 42, 2009 - approves the Mayor's appointment of Scott C. Newman as the Director of the Department of Public Safety

Councillor Oliver said that he has some questions for Director Newman and would have liked for him to be present at this meeting. Chair Vaughn asked if Councillor Oliver would like for the

proposal to be postponed so that Director Newman can be asked to attend the meeting. Councillor Oliver answered in the affirmative.

Councillor Oliver moved, seconded by Councillor Brown, to “Postpone” Proposal No. 42, 2009 until March 4, 2009. The motion carried by a vote of 8-0.

Update on MECA Board – Joe Wright, Mayor, City of Beech Grove

Mayor Wright said he has been a member of the Metropolitan Emergency Communications Agency (MECA) Board, representing the excluded cities, since 2004. He said the board is a five-member board consisting of: an excluded cities appointment, a Mayor of Indianapolis appointment, a Health and Hospital appointment, a township trustee appointment, and a Sheriff’s Department appointment. Mayor Wright said he is in his second year as the board president. He said the most recent project was the radio project. He said that some tragedies, such as the incident where the Air Force fighter flew into the Ramada Hotel in 1987 and 9-11, brought about the foresight that emergency responders must be able to communicate with one another. He said the Agency was established by the City-County Council and was primarily responsible for the development, implementation, and maintenance of Public Safety’s service voice and data systems, which include Emergency 9-1-1, Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD), Voice and Mobile Data Communications, and the most recently upgraded firehouse alerting, paging and records management for police and fire. Mayor Wright said MECA currently employs 21 full-time persons and occasionally, one or two seasonal persons, all who provide support and maintenance to eight Public Service Answering Points (PSAPs) throughout the county. He said MECA provides radio and other services to 11,000 users in 92 organizations, 50 of which are Law Enforcement agencies, ten Public Service agencies, and eight PSAP locations.

Mayor Wright said when MECA was established, it was given the task of designing, building and administering a state-of-the art communications system. In January of 1992, a new 800 megahertz (MHz) emergency communication system went on the air. He said toward the end of 2001, they realized that the technology was quickly becoming outdated and the dependency upon the technology was vastly growing. In November of 2004, MECA began the project of replacing this system and established a user group of approximately ten users that represented all of the various units of Public Safety. Mayor Wright said the board took a user-functional approach to replacing the system as opposed to a technology approach. This resulted in two competing proposals, Motorola and M/A-COM, and the board took the proposals back to the user group to decide which would best suit their objectives. Nine of the members of the user group voted for the digital version of the Motorola system because of voice clarity and delivery, system coverage and the agency inter-operative ability. He said the system is now performing quite well, but the mobile data side of the system was not addressed and will be the next major project. He said it is important to understand that the current legislative climate, with respect to some county-wide activities, includes some centralization of dispatch. Mayor Wright said that the Shepherd/Kernan proposal states that no one county will have more than two PSAPs in that county. Legislation is considering consolidating the multiple PSAPs into no more than two, and he believes that it has been decided to designate the airport and the county as the two. However, some of the PSAPs that are specifically dedicated to higher learning institutions, such as IUPUI, would be exempt from the consolidation.

Chair Vaughn asked Mayor Wright to explain how MECA works with the PSAPs. Mayor Wright answered that MECA is the agency that manages the infrastructure and equipment of all of the PSAPs, as well as the Telecom lines to the PSAPs. Chair Vaughn asked who answers 9-1-1 emergency calls. Mayor Wright answered that AT&T answers those calls and routes them to the best of their ability to the correct PSAP, based on the origination of the call. Therefore, if the call is made by a landline phone, it is easy for AT&T to figure out the correct PSAP. However, if the call is made by cell phone, it is more difficult to determine which PSAP should get the call.

Councillor Cockrum asked if Mayor Wright could comment on the concerns with the issues that happened with the implementation of the new system. Mayor Wright answered that there were valid concerns because it was a new system and it was digital, which was a major change. He said there were some parts of the digital system in which there was a single source vendor for the encoding and decoding of the voice transmission. He said digital provides a more precise sound, but it was something that everyone had to get used to. It also provides better coverage. Mayor Wright said there was recently some national news discussing Votecoder Technology, which is a small chip that goes inside the radio that translates a voice going into the radio into a digital signal and then translates it back into audible sound on the other end. He said anytime computer software is involved in transforming one type of sound into another type of sound, misinterpretation may exist. He said it typically tries to pick up and translate the most dominant sound. He said, in some cases, the software was making a bad decision as to what sound was the most important, as it was picking up background noise instead of voices. This caused concern with the ability for firefighters to communicate while in burning buildings. Mayor Wright said there have been multiple versions to the Votecoder technology that has corrected that problem. He said the challenge was not with Motorola, because all digital vendors use the Votecoder technology. He said another issue was that two safety technologies were competing with one another. The Scott Airpacks, which are advanced technology that many of the fire agencies use make an audible sound when firefighters do not move for a certain amount of time. The audible gets louder as the time of no movement lengthens, causing this sound to become the dominant sound. Mayor Wright said, in addition, when the Airpacks get low, firefighters' masks vibrate, and the microphone is attached to the mask. This causes more interference with the voice transmission. He said there was a question as to what safety feature offers the greatest benefit, and a decision had to be made as to what safety feature should be kept and which could be given up. Therefore, it was a multi-vendor challenge, trying to bring all the safety features together at the same time. He said the radio also gives firefighters an emergency alert button that gives the control operator information about which firefighter went into emergency status. He said the new system provides in-building coverage, and the analog system did not offer in-building coverage and there was no way to communicate.

Councillor Pfisterer asked if the problem with coverage inside buildings, such as Conesco, Lucas Oil, and some hospitals has improved. Mayor Wright answered in the affirmative, and stated that there are still a few federal buildings in which they wanted in-building coverage but could not get because of not being able to get inside. Councillor Pfisterer asked if there is a need for additional bands to provide additional channels to provide relief for the radios in case of a major incident. Mayor Wright said he is not sure how much band width is currently being used, but it has been increased. He said there are 11 towers now instead of five, and MECA has taken on other school systems and other agencies have joined the system and brought their band width over with them. Mayor Wright said he is very encouraged by their ability to grow the system.

Councillor Oliver asked if this new technology has eliminated the previous problems with dead zones, dropped calls, and blind spots in particular areas. Mr. Wright answered that the technology has increased coverage to 99%. He said they have not received any complaints about any dropped calls or lost communications, and the digital coverage is much better than the previous coverage.

Councillor Hunter asked how many members of the MECA Board are Public Safety Personnel. Mayor Wright answered that one member is a public safety employee. Councillor Hunter said it is his understanding that under the new provision, the dispatch centers that are under authority other than a law enforcement agency must have a board comprised of majority members representing criminal justice agencies per Indiana Administrative Code 5.2.10 and the NCIC 2000 operating manual. He asked if Mayor Wright is aware that the make-up of the board may have to change fairly quickly because of the provision. Mayor Wright answered in the negative. Chair Vaughn asked how dispatch centers are defined as it relates to the code. Councillor Hunter said that he is unsure, but that should be examined. Councillor Hunter said that the ordinance may need to be changed if the Board is not comprised of 51% law enforcement. He added that if it is a regional dispatch center, the board must be comprised of a majority of members representing criminal justice agencies. Councillor Hunter said that he believes the Council should research the Indiana Code to see how it affects this particular board. Mayor Wright said he believes that the board may need to expand to accommodate the Administrative Code, and with so many users in so many different parts of the county, it makes a lot of sense to include more law enforcement. Chair Vaughn said that he believes that the MECA Board is in compliance with the Code, as the excluded cities are represented by the Mayor, the City of Indianapolis is represented by the Mayor, and the Sheriff has a representative.

Councillor Hunter asked if they have received fewer complaints since everyone has gotten used to the technology. Mayor Wright answered in the affirmative, and stated that the coverage and clarity have been tremendously better, but the function of the system is different. However, it is the technology that the users preferred.

With no further business pending, and upon motion duly made, the Public Safety and Criminal Justice Committee of the City-County Council was adjourned at 6:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Ryan Vaughn, Chair
Public Safety and Criminal Justice Committee